



Health



Coronavirus In Colorado

KUNC is here to keep you up-to-date on the news about COVID-19 — the disease caused by the novel coronavirus — Colorado's response to its spread in our state and its impact on Coloradans.

Following CDC, Colorado To Drop Statewide Mask Mandate For

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Matt Bloom/KUNC /

A sign encourages mask wearing in downtown Breckenridge.

Updated at 6:39 p.m.

Fully vaccinated Coloradans can now go without masks in most public settings unless a specific business or local regulation requires otherwise, Gov. Jared Polis said Friday. The announcement comes on the heels of the Centers for Disease Control's new guidance that vaccinated people can safely stop wearing masks.

"We are going from mask wearing requirements to mask wearing suggestions," Polis said. "This is certainly a big step. We've reached a level of immunity where the pandemic isn't over, but where we are safer."

Polis cautioned that it may take several weeks for businesses to adjust their rules, so Coloradans should still keep a mask on hand.

"I'm going to bring my mask with me everywhere in my pocket," Polis said. "And when asked, of course, as a matter of respect, I'll put it on and there will be many businesses that continue to do that, perhaps your local grocery store for the next few weeks, perhaps other businesses that are frequented by others."

The state is extending a public health order requiring masks for unvaccinated residents, Polis said. People can expect to encounter mask requirements for unvaccinated residents in places such as schools, DMVs, healthcare settings and prisons through at least June 1.

The CDC's new guidance applies only to vaccinated people. Once immunized, the CDC says you can "resume activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance."

Colorado had a statewide mask mandate for almost a year. The [executive order](#) required mask-wearing in all schools, child care centers and most indoor public spaces.

The planned easing comes as more than 2.7 million people have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Colorado began vaccinating teens as young as 12 years old this week.

During a health department press conference on Thursday, Rachel Herlihy, the state's top epidemiologist, reiterated that the new guidance only applies to fully vaccinated people.

"We know that there's obviously a portion of our adult population that is not yet fully vaccinated," Herlihy said. "Fully vaccinated means two weeks out from that second shot."

Local health departments are also reacting to the new CDC guidance

Larimer County is planning to lift its local public health order related to COVID-19. The county said starting May 17, it will defer to the state for further guidance on mask-wearing and social distancing policies for businesses and large gatherings.

The county's cases of COVID-19 have dropped significantly in recent weeks thanks to vaccinations.

"COVID-19 is now a preventable disease," said Tom Gonzales, the county's public health director. "We are grateful to our residents for the actions they continue to take to end the pandemic."

Boulder County's [mask order](#) is still in effect, a spokeswoman told KUNC. It requires masks in all public-facing indoor public spaces.

Weld County has never had a local mask mandate. The county's health department did not return a request for comment.

School districts keeping mask policies

Poudre School District said in a statement Friday it would require teachers and students to wear masks through the remainder of the school year.

"Staff will consider Thursday's CDC announcement and evaluate what that may mean for district operations in summer 2021 and beyond," the statement read. "As with all aspects of the pandemic, PSD will keep working closely with the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment."

Greeley-Evans School District 6 is also keeping its mask policy for staff and students through the remainder of the school year.

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Matt Bloom

I cover a wide range of issues within Colorado's dynamic economy including energy, labor, housing, beer, marijuana, elections and other general assignment stories.

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